

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /057 W

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R 221919Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5141

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 4576

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: FIGUERES ANNOUNCES HE WILL SUPPORT FACIO FOR PRESIDENCY

1. SUMMARY: IN ANNOUNCING HIS SUPPORT FOR FACIO'S CANDIDACY TO BE THE GOVERNMENT PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE, JOSE FIGUERES REITERATED THE NEED FOR A SUSPENSION OF THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT BASIC REFORM OF THE COSTA RICAN SYSTEM. FACIO HAS ACCEPTED FIGUERES' THESIS ON THE NEED FOR REFORM, BUT REJECTS THE NOTION OF A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. FIGUERES' ANNOUNCEMENT, COMBINED WITH HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE PARTY PRESIDENCY, HAS LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS IN THE GOVERNMENT PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAS DECIDED TO SUPPORT FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALO FACIO FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERATION PARTY (PLN) CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA. FACIO WILL LEAVE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO BEGIN HIS CAMPAIGN OCTOBER 1. (PLN WILL CHOOSE ITS CANDIDATE THROUGH A NATIONAL PRIMARY ELECTION TO BE HELD IN MARCH 1977,

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS IN FEBRUARY, 1978).

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3. FIGUERES DECISION WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. HE HAS STATED PRIVATELY FOR MONTHS THAT FACIO WOULD MAKE THE BEST PRESIDENT (BUT NOT THE BEST CANDIDATE) OF THE ANNOUNCED PLN HOPEFULS (PLN SECRETARY-GENERAL LUIS ALBERTO MONGE, EX-MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HERNAN GARRON, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS ALVARO JENKINS).

4. WHAT WAS UNEXPECTED IN FIGUERES MOVE WAS HOW HE WENT ABOUT IT, AND THE TIMING. AT THE PLN PARTY ASSEMBLY SEPTEMBER 12, FIGUERES COMPLETELY SURPRISED THE PLN LEADERS BY ANNOUNCING HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE PARTY PRESIDENCY, A POSITION HE HAS HELD SINCE 1974. RESIGNATION, HE EXPLAINED LATER, LEFT HIM FREE TO SUPPORT THE CANDIDATE OF HIS CHOICE.

5. FIGUERES' MESSAGE TO PARTY LEADERS IN RESIGNING, HOWEVER, WAS ONE OF A MIFFED LEADER WHOSE PARTY HAD REJECTED HIS RECENT PROPOSALS I.E., FOR REFUSING HIS ATTEMPT TO HAVE THE CONSTITUTION CHANGED TO PERMIT HIM TO RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN 1978, AND FOR IGNORING HIS PLAN TO SUSPEND THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT FAR REACHING REFORMS TO BE ENACTED THROUGH EXECUTIVE DECREE. (SAN JOSE A-52). AS HE LEVELLED BROADSIDES AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE OPPOSED HIS NOTIONS, FIGUERES ONCE AGAIN CALLED FOR A NATIONAL REFERENDUM ON A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT (RULE BY EXECUTIVE DECREE; SUSPENSION OF THE LEGISLATURE AND JUDICIAL REVIEW) THAT WOULD PERMIT MODERNIZATION OF THE COSTA RICAN SYSTEM, AND GETTING BUREAUCRACY AND CORRUPTION UNDER CONTROL. HE PREDICTED THAT WITHOUT SUCH REFORMS COSTA RICA WOULD BE GOVERNED BEFORE 2000 BY EITHER "A CASTRO OR A PINOCHET".

6. ALL THE PLN "PRE-CANDIDATES" EXCEPT FACIO HAVE REJECTED THE FIGUERES THESIS; SUCH REFORMS, THEY HOLD, CAN BE CARRIED OUT UNDER THE EXISTING SYSTEM. FACIO, IN ANNOUNCING HIS BASIC AGREEMENT WITH FIGUERES, CALLED FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION (AN IDEA THAT DANIEL O'DUBER FLOATED IN HIS 1974 INAUGURAL ADDRESS) BUT REJECTED A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

7. FIGUERES CONVEYED HIS CHOICE OF FACIO THROUGH LETTERS TO THE PLN CANDIDATES MADE PUBLIC ON SEPTEMBER 19. HE STATED THAT HE WILL RESPECT THE PARTY'S DECISION ON THE NOMINEE AND THE CANDIDATE'S VIEWS ON FIGUERES' REFORM PROPOSALS. FIGUERES CONFIDENTIAL

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ALSO NOTED POINTEDLY, HOWEVER, THAT IF THE PLN NOMINEE DOES NOT ACCEPT HIS VIEWS, FIGUERES' PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN WOULD BE LIMITED TO HIS VOTE, AND THAT HE WOULD NOT ACTIVELY CAMPAIGN.

8. COMMENT: FIGUERES HAS ONCE AGAIN SERVED AN ULTIMATUM TO HIS PARTY, THIS TIME UNDER THE THREAT OF HIS NONPARTICIPATION IN THE 1978 CAMPAIGN. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER OR NOT FIGUERES WILL BE ABLE TO TRANSMIT HIS PERSONAL LOYALTY TO HIS

CHOSEN INSTRUMENT, GONZALO FACIO. FIGUERES HAS BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS PRETTY MUCH IN THE PAST - BUT ALWAYS IN THE CONTEXT OF PARTY UNITY AND CONTROL OF PARTY MACHINERY THROUGH ODUBER. THE DIFFERENCE THIS TIME IS THAT THERE IS A SERIOUS GENERATIONAL DIVISION IN PLN THAT IS MANIFESTED PRIMARILY IN THE CANDIDACY OF LUIS ALBERTO MONGE, WHO, WITH DANIEL ODUBER, IS REPUTED TO CONTROL THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY.

9. FIGUERES ANNOUNCEMENT PLACES PRES. ODUBER IN SOMETHING OF A BIND. IF ODUBER FAVORS FACIO, AND IF FACIO WINS THE NOMINATION AS HE WOULD THEN BE EXPECTED TO DO, THE PARTY WILL BE UNITED. IF ODUBER DECIDES TO BUCK FIGUERES - AND THE PERSONAL RIVALRY IS SUCH THAT HE JUST MIGHT - THE PARTY RISKS A SERIOUS DIVISION AND POSSIBLY THE LOSS OF VALUABLE FIGURES SUPPORT IN THE CAMPAIGN. ODUBER WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT FIGUERES SIT BY THE SIDELINES FROM THE PARTY PRESIDENCY AND WRITE HIS MEMOIRS AS HE HAS PROMISED FOR SO LONG. IN MAKING HIS MOVE IN FAVOR OF FACIO THE WAY HE DID, FIGUERES HAS ONCE AGAIN DISPLAYED HIS LEGENDARY STRONG MINDEDNESS, AND HIS DELIGHT IN KEEPING THE COUNTRY OFF BALANCE WITH HIS POLITICAL MOVES. HE HAS ALSO LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR A TOUGHER, TIGHTER, AND POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE INTERNAL SELECTION PROCESS IN THE GOVERNMENT PARTY THAN HAD BEST ENVISAGED. TODMAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** GOVERNMENT REFORM, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, ELECTION CANDIDATES  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 SEP 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** powellba  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** powellba  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 16 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <16 JUL 2004 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by powellba>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** FIGUERES ANNOUNCES HE WILL SUPPORT FACIO FOR PRESIDENCY  
**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, CS, PLN, (FACIO, GONZALO), (FIGUERES, JOSE)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006